
THE PERPETUITIE, ADVANTAGES, AND UNIVERSALITY
OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION:

S E R M O N.



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PREACHED BEFORE

THE EDINBURGH MISSIONARY SOCIETY,

IN BRISTO-STREET MEETING-HOUSE,

On Thursday, Nov. 10, 1796.

K.

BY JAMES PEDDIE,

MINISTER OF THE ASSOCIATE CONGREGATION
IN BRISTO-STREET.

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EDINBURGH, Nov. 10. 1796.

AT a General Meeting of the Edinburgh Missionary Society,

RESOLVED,

THAT the thanks of this Society be given to the Rev. Mr Peddie for his excellent Sermon, preached this day at their desire; and that he be requested to allow the same to be printed for the benefit of the Society.

WM. DYMCK, Sec. pro temp.

**THE PERPETUITY, ADVANTAGES, AND UNIVERSALITY
OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION:**

S E R M O N.

PSALM lxxii. 17.

*His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued
as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him; all
nations shall call him blessed.*

THIS psalm is entitled, "A psalm for Solo-
mon;" but those persons must have read
it with little attention who need to be informed,
that "a greater than Solomon is here." David,
indeed, begins with prayer for Solomon, his son
and the destined heir of his throne; but the spi-
rit of prophecy carries him away insensibly from

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the king of Israel to the King of Zion, and leads him into an eloquent description of the extent and perpetuity of his dominion, and of the glory and felicity of his reign.

The fame of Solomon reached to all the adjacent countries. His dominions were more extensive than those of any other monarch of the race of David. His reign too was long and happy; for his wisdom attracted the wealth of the world into his kingdom, and secured to his subjects a mild and equitable administration of the laws; while his high reputation kept the neighbouring nations in awe, and rendered his reign peaceful and tranquil, little disturbed either by intestine convulsions or by foreign wars. But Solomon's dominion was not universal, nor his fame untarnished, nor his reign without end. To him many of the predictions in this psalm can be applied only in a secondary sense; and some of them not at all. What meaning can be attached to such expressions as these, if they be restricted to him? "All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him *." "They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout
" out

* Ver. 11.

"out all generations *." Was Solomon indeed king over all the earth? or did this son of David live for ever? No: There is no king but *one* to whom these predictions can with truth be applied;—that great and good King whom Christians serve and adore; the true Son of David, the great antitype of Solomon, "to whom the Lord God gave the throne of his father David," and of whom he hath said, "He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end †."

Of Jesus, therefore, it is that the psalmist speaks; for in him the glorious things predicted in this psalm have received their proper fulfilment. What is there here predicted, that is not fulfilled in him? Peaceful and glorious is his reign. Equitable and gentle is his administration. His subjects are all contented and happy. His reputation is great, unsullied and unfading. His princely virtues, uncontaminated by error or defect, adorn his character with unrivalled excellence, and qualify him for the most extensive rule. His character, placed in whatever attitude, will bear the narrowest inspection.

* Verse 5.

† Luke i. 32, 33.

spection. It is all over glorious;—a sun every
 where luminous, without one dark spot to ob-
 scure its lustre, and increasing in glory the
 nearer it is approached, and the more distinctly
 it is beheld. Though many ages have elapsed
 since Jesus began his reign, during which his
 character has been examined often with malig-
 nant accuracy, one real blemish has not yet
 been discovered in it, nor has it fallen one de-
 gree in the estimation of those who know him.
 Like the sun, it is as glorious now as when it
 first shone. Dark vapours have often ascended
 from the earth and from the pit of hell, and
 spread themselves abroad to obscure the glory
 of his character and fully the splendour of his
 reign; but as often have his all-powerful rays
 dissipated the surrounding darkness, and burst
 from behind those clouds with new and increa-
 sed glory. And never shall it be otherwise.
 The King shall live and reign for ever. His
 fame shall spread from region to region, till it
 reach “the isles afar off, that have not heard
 “his fame neither have seen his glory*,” till,
 like the sun, it visit every quarter of the globe,
 blessing the countries on which it shines, and
 “the

* Isa. lxvi. 19.

"the whole earth be filled with his glory *."

"His name shall endure for ever ; his name

"shall be continued as long as the sun : and

"men shall be blessed in him ; all nations shall

"call him blessed."

"These sayings are faithful and true." They form the foundation of our hopes, that Christianity shall neither be extinguished by those fetid vapours of a false philosophy which threaten to fill our atmosphere, nor be prevented, by the gross darkness which covers a large portion of the earth, from illuminating its remotest and most inaccessible parts. While they warm our hearts with the most benevolent wishes for their accomplishment, they excite the fervour of our prayers, and animate us to zealous and persevering exertion. They assure us, that every hostile attempt against Christianity shall be defeated ; that every obstruction to its universal spread shall, sooner or later, be removed out of the way ; that the prayers of saints shall be heard, and their exertions finally crowned with success. For Jesus' "name shall endure for ever ; his name shall be continued as long as the sun :

"and

* Psalm lxxii, 19.

"and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed."

That these predictions shall be accomplished is not with us matter of doubt. Hence our prayers and our associations, for the express purpose of communicating the knowledge and blessings of the gospel to unenlightened and heathen nations. Yet the rapid growth of infidelity in the more civilized parts of the world, and the apparently insuperable obstacles in the way of the introduction of Christianity into those which are more barbarous, render it expedient that the grounds of our faith be frequently presented to the view of our minds; that our faith be not shaken by these unpromising appearances, nor our prayers be discontinued, or our exertions cease, through despair of success. The text which I have chosen furnishes me with an opportunity of bringing some of these to your recollection. It is a prediction of the perpetuity, of the advantages, and of the universality of the Christian religion. Christianity shall be perpetual; for "his name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun:" Christianity shall never cease to be beneficial

neficial to men; for "men shall be blessed in
"him:" Christianity shall become universal;
for "all nations shall call him blessed."

I. CHRISTIANITY SHALL BE PERPETUAL. We
arrive at this conclusion by two methods; by
the consideration of past experience, and by the
divine assurances which we have received of its
perpetuity.

It is of importance to remark, that the pro-
phesy of the psalmist has been in a considerable
degree already fulfilled. Christianity has exist-
ed almost eighteen centuries; and this fact
forms a presumption that, unless causes should
operate against it which have not operated hi-
therto, or unless those which have should assail
it with a new degree of force, it will continue
to be known and believed to the latest age. It
is not a new institution, of the stability of which
we have no experience. It has stood long;
and every period of its history abounds with
events by which it has been put to the severest
proof. The rain has descended in frequent tor-
rents, the winds have blown with reiterated and
seemingly irresistible fury; yet its foundations
have remained firm, and the result of every ex-
periment

periment yet made has led to this conclusion, that "it is founded on a rock."

Our religion has survived calamities which have proved fatal to every human institution. Since the æra of its commencement, "what desolations have been made in the earth!" The vast edifice of the Roman empire, "strong as iron," which had resisted so many storms, and had seemed to acquire new strength and solidity by those storms by which it had been agitated, has long since been swept away. The kingdoms which rose out of its ruins have also perished in their turn. The wrecks of the ancient inhabitants of those countries in which Christianity at first flourished have been mingled with new races of men, and can no more be discovered. The earth has assumed a new appearance; new languages, new customs, new manners, occupy the place of those which then prevailed. Learning has been succeeded by ignorance and barbarism. The light and civilization of modern times have risen out of the darkness of the middle ages. All things have experienced change: what formerly existed has "waxed old and vanished away." Christianity alone has remained; often shaken by the convulsions

vulsions of the earth, but never overthrown; frequently covered by the deep waters, but emerging continually out of the floods which seemed to have overwhelmed it, fair and beautiful as ever. How shall we account for this strange phenomenon? By admitting the truth of our religion, and considering its preservation as the peculiar care of providence, which, amidst all the revolutions of the world, has been constantly providing that, according to the divine purpose, Christ's "name should endure for ever, " and be continued as long as the sun."

We cannot, indeed, account in a satisfactory manner for the introduction of Christianity into the world, or for its continuance during so long a period, on any other principle than that "it is of God, and cannot be overthrown." In its native simplicity and purity, it is not adapted to the taste of an ignorant and corrupt world; for it cannot accommodate itself to their prejudices, nor flatter their vices. It has never, therefore, been popular. It has uniformly been disliked by worldly men, and opposed.

When it first began to break in upon this benighted world, in the personal ministry of our blessed Lord, it had an earnest of that reception

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with which it has met in every subsequent period. Jesus arose as "the Sun of righteousness;" but "men loved darkness rather than light, "because their deeds were evil*." His doctrine shone with the pure radiance of heavenly truth, unclouded by error. His life was one beam of untainted holiness; it blazed with the combined splendour of a thousand graces. His miracles, all benevolent and all open to inspection, shed a glory around him altogether divine. But the world, instead of admiring, were offended with doctrines too sublime for the apprehension of their dark minds, and a morality too pure for the love of their depraved hearts. The name of Jesus was hated, for the very reasons on account of which it ought to have been honoured and loved. Let his name perish, cried the men of that age; and a corrupt priesthood was foremost in the cry. He fell, the victim of their hatred, loaded with every species of opprobrium which their malignant hearts could devise, in their opinion to rise no more for ever to life, or to esteem. Vain imagination! He rose more glorious by his fall. In heaven, whither he hath ascended, he enjoys "a name above every
"name;"

* John iii. 19.

"name *;" and on earth the name of "the just one" lives, and his memory is yet blessed, after the words of Solomon have long been fulfilled in his persecutors, "The name of the wicked shall rot †."

Christianity had the same fate in the age of the Apostles, as in the time of our Lord. It was "to the Jew a stumbling-block, and to the Greek foolishness ‡;" the object of the detestation of some, of the contempt of others, and the subject of persecution by all. The world, as if by joint consent, rose in arms against Jesus' blessed name. The Jewish doctor and the Gentile philosopher, the statesman and the priest, the polite and the vulgar, though influenced by different motives, were animated by one spirit of hostility to the reputation, the religion and the followers of Christ. No method was left unattempted to extirpate Christianity from the earth. Argument and invective, persuasion and force, were employed in turns. To all this what had Christianity to oppose? The currents of prejudice and of fashion ran with full stream against it. It was not in alliance with one state in the world. It could boast of no philosophers, to en-

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* Phil. ii. 9.

† Prov. x. 7.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 23.

gage the attention of the learned by profound reasonings on the excellence of its principles ; of no orators, to persuade men of taste to admire it by the charm of fine writing ; of no poets, to captivate the multitude by adorning it in the dress of fancy. The men who first published the name of Jesus were apparently ill-qualified for doing credit to any cause. They were poor and illiterate ; they had neither eloquence nor influence. They were despised by the world, because they were Jews ; and hated by their own countrymen, because they had become Christians. Yet in such hands, amidst such discouragements, the cause of Christianity prospered. The infidel laughed at the absurd idea of a company of fishermen presuming to convert the nations : but while he amused himself at their expence, the fishermen preached, and lived, and suffered ; and the multitude believed, and were saved. The fire of persecution was kindled, and raged ; but the light was spread by the flames which were intended to consume. While “ the heathen raged, and the people “ imagined a vain thing, he that sitteth in heaven laughed ” at their impotent attempts ; “ the Lord had them,” and their schemes, “ in “ derision.”

"derision *." The name of Christ endured, and continued to gain more extensive reputation among men. "The fame" of the Son "of David went out into all lands." Jesus conquered faster, and extended his empire farther than ever did the Roman arms. Nothing could stem the mighty current of the truth. Like a torrent swelled by the rain of heaven, it descended from the mountains of Judah, broke down every opposing mound, swept before it every bulwark reared in order to prevent its progress, and forced a way for itself into the nations.

It would be tedious to follow the history of the name of Christ through the succession of ages down to the present time. After a painful struggle of almost three centuries with external opposition, it began to experience, more powerfully than ever before, danger from internal causes. It had scarcely begun to repose itself in the lap of worldly prosperity, when, in the fourth century, the Arian heresy spread itself over the churches, threatening to hide the royal honours of the name of Jesus from the view of men; but although, for a while, only one man, Athanasius, had courage to assert his divine dignity,

* Psalm ii. 1. 4.

nity, the cloud was scattered, and "the earth was" again "lightened with his glory." The great apostasy of Rome soon followed; and, during the middle ages, innumerable superstitions usurped the place of the institutions of Christ, and prevailing ignorance overspread the church; yet, even in the periods of grossest darkness, scattered rays penetrated through the surrounding gloom, illuminating a series of individuals, till the light burst on a considerable portion of the Christian world at the glorious æra of the Reformation. Its history since that period, we all know; true religion has been often persecuted, and it still endures. Every method, indeed, in every age, for destroying pure Christianity, has terminated in disappointment and shame. The rock of the church has stood immovable these eighteen hundred years, though assailed continually by the angry billows. It has often been covered by their spray; but their fury has spent itself in vain: they have retired, broken by their own violence, and murmuring in their retreat.

Has the name of Jesus endured so long, and will it not continue as long as the sun? What has it to fear, which it has not experienced already?

ready? Or can it fall before power or art, which it has so long successfully resisted? Already earth and hell have done their utmost. Let them repeat their attempts. Let them try new and more ingenious methods of opposing the name of Jesus. Foiled in argument, let them fill their quiver with the envenomed arrows of ridicule and bitter sarcasm. Despairing of success by fire and sword, let them arm themselves with all the subtilty of a specious philosophy. We shall not despair of the cause of Christ. We have seen it triumph over so many enemies, and resist so many methods of attack, that we presume not when we believe, that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it *." The idle boasts of those who hate his name excite the scorn of him who sitteth on the throne. They and their attempts shall perish together; but "His name shall endure for ever, his name shall be continued as long as the sun."

We do not, however, rest our persuasion, that the name of Christ shall endure for ever, merely on experience of the past; for emergencies may be conceived, which would try the stability of the Christian faith more severely than any which have

* Mat. xvi. 18.

have yet arisen, and might issue in its final destruction. From every apprehension of this kind we are relieved by the positive assurances with which the scripture abounds, that Christianity shall, in all events, continue to be professed and believed, "till the heavens be no more." "His name shall be continued as long as the sun." Empires shall rise and fall, and the world, as in time past, shall be subject to perpetual change; but the throne on which Jesus sits shall be shaken by no convulsion of the earth, nor the crown which he wears ever wither on his brow. "The Father hath appointed to him a kingdom" diverse from all kingdoms; for "his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed *." "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever: the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this †."

With such assurances of the perpetuity of his kingdom on earth, what combination formed against

* Dan. vii. 14.

† Isa. ix. 7.

gainst its interests, or what train of inauspicious events ought to fill us with dismay? We fear no change in the purpose of our God, we dread no violation of his promise; for he is immutable. We believe better of his wisdom than to suppose that he can be over-reached by artifice, and of his power, than that he can be overcome by strength. No difficulties can occur to make new measures necessary, or to render it impracticable for him to execute his plan. Every contingency lay open to his view, when he formed his purpose, and gave his promise; and, the plan of providence having been arranged by him in consummate wisdom, the whole series of events, though in many parts intricate and seemingly adverse, must be subservient to the great design of perpetuating and diffusing the Christian faith. The duration of our religion, therefore, shall be coeval with that of the world; the frame of nature and Christianity shall dissolve together. While the sun performs his diurnal circuit in the heavens, and the moon by her paler light cheers the world in his absence, the light of evangelical truth cannot expire; these luminaries remain pledges of the divine veracity. "Once have I sworn by
" my holiness, that I will not lie unto David.

“ His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as
 “ the sun before me. It shall be established for
 “ ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in
 “ heaven *.”

Here, then, are the two great pillars which support our religion, the power and the faithfulness of God ; and, thus supported, it is impossible that it can be undermined by art, or overthrown by violence. Persuaded that, with such security, it must be perpetual, how must we pity those deluded and vain-glorious men, who, over-rating their own abilities, fancy that Christianity is ready to perish, and by *their* means ; who tell us that, in the close of the eighteenth century, the “ Age of Reason” has arrived, and that of superstition drawn towards its close ; and who boast that, by the rapid progress of the human mind in knowledge, Christianity must retire, and give place to that idol of their worship, a new and improved philosophy. We give them credit for their zeal, and we doubt not but their hopes sometimes rise as high as their wishes. But, whilst we lament the fatal influence of their tenets on the giddy and inconsiderate, we console ourselves by the recollection, that “ our God is
 “ in

* Psalm lxxxix. 35,—37.

“ in the heavens * ;” and that, “ though there be
 “ many devices in the heart of man ” for the
 overthrow of the Christian faith, “ nevertheless,
 “ the counsel of the Lord that shall stand †.”
 Christianity, such as the Scriptures teach, rejoices
 in the diffusion of knowledge ; it is ignorance
 alone which it dreads as an enemy. Human
 systems shall obtain credit, or be exploded, as
 fashion or caprice shall dictate ; but the truth
 is great, and shall ultimately prevail. The ta-
 per of philosophy, in the light of which multi-
 tudes so greatly rejoice, and which they suppose
 shall obscure and at last extinguish Christianity,
 emits more smoke than flame, consumes while
 it shines, and shall burn down to its socket, and
 ingloriously expire. But “ the lamp which God
 “ hath ordained for his Anointed,” shall continue
 to burn, furnished perpetually with fresh oil
 from the great Repository of the skies ; and shall
 only then become dim, when overpowered by
 the meridian splendour of the heavenly state.
 “ His enemies will I clothe with shame, but on
 “ himself shall the crown flourish ‡.” “ I will cause
 “ thy name to be remembered in all generations ;
 “ therefore

* Psalm cxv. 3.

† Prov. xix. 21.

‡ Psalm cxxxii. 17, 18.

“therefore shall the people praise thee for ever
“and ever *.”

II. It is not enough, however, that we have shewn that Christianity shall be perpetual. The continuance of the name of Christ as long as the sun, would afford little consolation to mankind under the pressure of present calamities and the apprehension of future woes, if it possessed not the power, or should lose its efficacy to bless. We go on, therefore, with pleasure, to the illustration of our second proposition; That CHRISTIANITY, which is intended, and is peculiarly calculated to promote human happiness, SHALL NEVER CEASE TO BE BENEFICIAL TO MEN. “Men shall be blessed
“in him.”

That it is admirably adapted to advance the best interests of mankind, may be fairly concluded from this, that it claims God as its author, and that, as we have seen, his providence watches with peculiar care over its preservation. It originates in the misery of mankind, which it is the intention of divine grace by its means to remove, and for which, as being the contrivance of infinite wisdom, it furnishes a complete and
effectual

* Psalm xlv. 17.

effectual remedy. Could we have supposed the human mind covered with no darkness, or the conscience burdened with no guilt, we should have considered a revelation of divine grace as not necessary for the consolation and happiness of men. But this we are not permitted to suppose. Sin, the bane of human happiness, the prolific parent of a thousand miseries to man, has long prevailed in the world. Ignorance, the hateful offspring of sin, has spread her fable wings over the human soul, and conceals from the view of the sinner the way to God and the path to glory. Without a divine instructor, mankind, amidst the unavoidable calamities of life, must have wandered in vain in quest of consolation, and could never have been relieved from innumerable anxious uncertainties respecting futurity. Christianity is this instructor; and its capacity to furnish us with all needful information on points so important, is what renders it so great a blessing to the world. It "gives light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death; it guides our feet into the way of peace*." It reveals the name of Christ; that divine Saviour, whose intention in visiting the
abodes

* Luke i. 77. 79.

abodes of men was to bless us with "the knowledge of salvation, by the remission of sins," and of whom it was of old predicted, that "in him all the families of the earth should be blessed *;" that crucified Jesus, who by his death made expiation for human guilt, who is deficient neither in ability nor in inclination to bless, and who spreads happiness around him wherever he is known.

These great purposes for which Christianity is beneficial to men, can be served by nothing which can be substituted in its stead. I speak not of those superstitions, which have in all ages prevailed in the world; for these only instruct us in the universal misery of the human race, in the anxious search which is made in all quarters after happiness, and in the incapacity of the untutored mind to discover the path that leads to it. The state of mankind in those countries to which the gospel has never reached, exhibits an awful picture of human ignorance and misery. Vice appears in the most odious forms of licentious indulgence and of deliberate cruelty. A thousand base idols receive that homage which is JEHOVAH'S due,

* Gen. xxii. 18,

due, and a thousand follies, absurdities and abominations are practised under the sacred name of worship, and as means of averting the vengeance and securing the favour of Heaven. Their misery cries aloud for instruction concerning that divine Saviour in whom men shall be blessed.

Even the most celebrated systems of philosophers could not have benefited the world like the religion of Christ. With more appearance of ingenuity than the superstitions of the vulgar, they fall equally short of the object at which they aim. The lamp of reason which burns in the human breast, though trimmed with ever so much care, gives only a feeble and wavering light; and the greatest geniusses, who have sat down to read the divine nature with no better assistance, have risen from the task with little improvement, unable to read distinctly the very first letters of JEHOVAH's name, or to discover the service with which he will be pleased, and the satisfaction which he will accept for past transgressions. Can the light of the stars, especially when the sky is obscured, serve man for the purposes of life? And how shall reason, obscured, as it confessedly is, by ignorance, and prejudice

judice and vice, light the sinner to God and happiness? The deductions of reason can at best produce in the breast only a tremulous hope, founded on probability. They must often, like those wandering lights which appear to the benighted traveller in marshy places, mislead while they seem to direct. Christianity alone can conduct to true felicity. Its whole horizon is illuminated by the great "Light of the world;" by "the Sun of righteousness," whose beams irradiate, whose presence enlivens, whose influence gives life, vigour, activity, joy, to those on whom he shines. A single ray from Christ, the great Fountain of spiritual light, is of more use to lead a sinner to God, than all the torches lighted up by the reason or fancy of all the sages of ancient and modern times.

What a blessing must the gospel be, which has such power to scatter the darkness in which the world have bewildered themselves, and which is possessed of such efficacy to sanctify and comfort the heart! Can he be deemed a friend to mankind, who does not wish it to be perpetual, and who rejoices not in every attempt to diffuse the knowledge of its peculiar doctrines more widely through the world? The interests of
Christianity

Christianity and of the human race are the same. Happiness follows in its train wherever it goes, but retires from those places from which it is banished. Zeal for its propagation is a holy flame, the noblest passion that can warm the human breast; it burns at once with love to God and love to man. Those whose talents are devoted to the melioration of the soil, to the improvement of manufactures, or to the cultivation of science; who add to the stock of useful knowledge, or to the number of the conveniencies and comforts of life, are indeed benefactors to men. But they labour in a very inferior department; the amount of the benefits which they procure is easily calculated, and their value ceases with the short period of human life. They do nothing to still the inward tumult of the soul; to enable the trembling sinner to look up to God with more confidence, or forward to futurity with less fear. This nobler office is reserved for Christianity, as its exclusive province. In proportion as its peculiar doctrines are known and believed, it meliorates the condition of men in this world, and secures to them felicity in the next. It softens and humanizes mankind. It civilizes the barbarian, humbles

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the proud, meekens the resentful, expands the heart of the selfish, and sanctifies the impure. It scatters the fears which haunt the guilty conscience, and diffuses through the troubled soul tranquillity and peace. It smoothes the rugged path of life, by the amiable tempers which it inspires, by the gentle influence of its precepts, and by the heavenly consolations which it pours into the soul; while it opens to the view those delightful prospects of the divine favour and felicity beyond the grave, which alone can mitigate the gloom of adversity, and cheer the dark "valley of the shadow of death." In one word, "men are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*." By the faith of the gospel, the whole soul is subjected to Christ, who triumphs over men only to bless them, whose gentle sway is true felicity; for the conquests which he makes are deliverances from guilt and misery, and the glorious career which he pursues, in subduing men "to the obedience of faith," is every where marked, not like that of other conquerors, with desolation and blood, but with light, and life, and liberty, and joy.

Such

* Eph. i. 3.

Such are the happy effects which Christianity is eminently and exclusively calculated to produce, and which, in all time past, have proceeded from the knowledge and faith of its distinguishing doctrines. If these effects have not followed it in all instances, and in their full extent, this has not arisen from any defect in the Christian system, but from very different causes. With many individuals, it has degenerated into an empty name; and while men remain ignorant of its first principles, or oppose those doctrines in which its glory and efficacy consist, or, knowing and assenting to them, "receive not the love of the truth," it is in vain to expect that the mere profession of it can promote either their present or future welfare. Christianity, when degraded by superstition or perverted by error, when professed for convenience where it is not believed, or employed only as an engine of worldly policy, must cease to be a fit instrument of human ^{cs} felicity; and if, in such cases, it leave men where it found them, or prove more noxious than beneficial, "the truth as it is in Jesus" is blameless. It ought not to be considered as responsible for the vices and miseries occasioned by

by ignorance of its nature, or by its abuse. What is it to us, though nominal religion be useless, and that which is false prejudicial to mankind? Our concern is only with genuine Christianity; and this experience has most decisively proved to be beneficial. Wherever the truth has been sincerely believed, and in proportion as it has been thus believed, it has operated, in the most surprising manner, to the consolation of the heart, and the regulation of the life. It has enabled thousands, in every age, to conquer the most inveterate bad habits, to resist the most dangerous temptations, to perform the most heroic actions, to endure, to triumph, amidst the most painful sufferings. It has raised them superior to the allurements of sense, to the opinion of the world, to the fear of death. The consciousness of the divine approbation, and the hope of a blessed immortality, have rendered them happy in the absence of every temporal comfort. yea under the feeling of every species of outward distress. They have had access to "the Fountain of living waters;" and this they have found enough for their felicity, when all the cisterns were broken, and every channel was dry.

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It becomes, therefore, a most interesting subject of enquiry, whether there be reason to expect, that Christianity will continue to produce those effects, so important to the happiness of mankind, for which it was designed, and which it hath hitherto in some measure produced.

On this subject we are not left to the painful uncertainty of conjecture. The assurance given us, that Christianity shall be perpetual, doubtless implies more than the preservation of the name. It authorises us to expect, that evangelical truth shall be transmitted to generations yet unborn, and that it shall never fail, through the faith of it, to sanctify and save. Present appearances, indeed, are adverse. A spirit of hostility to all that is important in our religion, to the Deity and atonement of Christ, to the personality and agency of the Spirit, to the doctrine and work of grace, is widely spread, and on the increase, in all parts of the Christian world ; and the truth, even where it is retained, is rather professed than believed. But, though the clouds are at present bound up, why should we suppose that they are never again to rain upon the earth ? Jesus still lives and reigns. He hath not yet exhausted that fulness of grace which he received
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from the Father, nor lost any portion of his ancient ability to save. He hath "the residue of
 "the Spirit *." He can, whensoever he pleases, send him to "revive his work in the midst of
 "the years †;" and we know him better than to suppose, that he is not now as much inclined as ever to communicate his grace, or that he is wearied of doing good to a guilty, miserable world. Often, in time past, he has "sent a
 "plenteous rain, whereby he has confirmed his
 "inheritance when it was weary ‡;" and will he, who has given the former rain in such copious showers, withhold the latter rain in its season? His promise stands yet on record; and his power, faithfulness and grace ensure its performance:
 "I will make the places about my hill a blessing, and I will cause the shower to come down
 "in his season; there shall be showers of blessing ||." "I will pour water on him that is
 "thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I
 "will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my
 "blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall
 "spring up as among the grass, as willows by
 "the water courses §." Though Sion, therefore, should

* Mal. ii. 15.

† Hab. iii. 2.

‡ Psalm lxxviii. 9.

|| Ezek. xxxiv. 26.

§ Isa. xlv. 3, 4.

should be parched for a season with drought, excessive as that which afflicted Israel in the days of Elijah, yet "times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord*:" "For the Lord will comfort Sion, he will comfort her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord †."

In grace, as in nature, God does nothing in vain. As long as he designs to continue on the earth a succession of creatures endowed with life, so long, and no longer, shall the sun continue to enlighten and warm it with his rays. And is it credible that he would preserve the light of the gospel, as he has assured us he will, to the latest age, if it were not his design, in every successive generation, "to open the eyes of men, and turn them," by its means, "from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God ‡?" As long as the gospel is preached, we have evidence that he designs "to bless," at least some individuals, "in turning them away from their iniquities ||;" and, while the intention remains, the means shall be rendered efficient.

* Acts iii. 19.

† Isa. li. 3.

‡ Acts xxvi. 18.

|| Acts iii. 26.

efficient. Jesus will remember his promise, "Lo, " I am with you alway, even unto the end of " the world *;" and not only assist his faithful servants in publishing the gospel of salvation, but accompany the word with that divine influence, without which it cannot profit. He will " send the rod of his strength out of Sion;" and " the people shall be" made " willing, in the " day of his power †." The Spirit of God shall follow the gospel in its progress through the world, to render it, by his Almighty agency, " the power of God to salvation;" and though he should not " be poured out from on high," on every occasion, in equal abundance, yet he shall never be altogether withheld, while the gospel itself is permitted to remain. When the end is no longer to follow, the means shall be withdrawn; and when this period shall arrive, we may conclude that " the mystery of God is finished," and that the frame of nature is about to be dissolved.

As long, therefore, as the sun endures, men shall be blessed in Christ. The gospel " shall " not," in any age of the world, " return to him" that sent it " void;" but it shall accomplish that " which

* Mat. xxviii. 20.

† Psalm cx. 2, 3.

* which he pleaseth, and it shall prosper in the
 “ thing whereto he hath sent it *.” Its fruits,
 indeed, shall not always make a plentiful crop ;
 but, in the most unfavourable seasons, there shall
 be “ as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three
 “ berries on the top of the uppermost bough, four
 “ or five in the utmost fruitful branches there-
 “ of †.” Though religion should not be favour-
 ed by the great or supported by the rich, yet
 there shall always be reason for saying of Sion,
 “ This and that man was born in her ; and the
 “ Highest himself shall establish her †.” “ A
 “ seed shall serve him, which shall be accounted
 “ to the Lord for a generation ||,” even though
 every pretender to wisdom and learning should
 disdain to bear his yoke, and though crouds who
 had once professed the truth should basely go
 over to the camp of the world. And as often
 as death shall cut down the ancient and honour-
 able in the church, a new race of converts to
 the faith shall be raised up, endued with equal
 or perhaps superior capacities of usefulness to
 those whose places they are destined to fill ; for
 “ instead of the fathers shall be the children §,”

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* Isa. lv. 11. † Isa. xvii. 6. † Psalm lxxxvii. 5,

|| Psalm xxii. 30. § Psalm xlv. 16.

in a continual succession of faithful ministers proclaiming the truth, and of obedient people receiving it in faith and love. Men "shall fear him as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations;" for, in every generation, "he shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth *."

Instead of having reason to fear lest the gospel cease to be beneficial to men, we trust that the Lord will bless its latter end, even more than its beginning. There is a period announced in prophecy, a happy period, the arrival of which hath long been the subject of the fervent prayers and delightful expectation of good men, in which the church shall enjoy unexampled prosperity, and the preaching of the gospel be attended with uncommon success. *When* this "time to favour Sion shall come," we are not able positively to determine: but we know that there is a "set time," beyond which its approach cannot be delayed; and that, when it arrives, "the Lord shall build up Sion, and shall appear in his glory †." The gospel shall then be "preached," as in ancient times, "with the Holy

* Psalm lxxii. 5, 6.

† Psalm cii. 13. 16.

" Holy Ghost sent down from heaven ;" and apostolical purity and primitive love shall return. The force of truth shall be felt by greater numbers, and in a greater degree. Human systems shall give place to the doctrine of Christ, the spirit of party to holy zeal, a lifeless formality to the power of godliness, and every unhallowed passion to the love of God and the love of man. Few shall choose to dwell either with Unitarians amidst eternal frosts, or with enthusiasts, in the torrid zone, under a burning sky. The mild beams of evangelical truth shall enlighten the understanding and warm the heart ; and light, and love, and holiness, and joy, shall abound. " In that day, shall the deaf hear the words of this book ; and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness *." " And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim ; and the ears of them that hear shall hearken : the heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly †." " Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of

" seven

* Isa. xxix. 18.

† Isaiah xxxii. 3, 4.

“ seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth
 “ up the breach of his people, and healeth the
 “ stroke of their wound *.” Christ shall be ser-
 ved by an enlightened, a holy, an affectionate
 and numerous people. Converts shall come to
 him, not as detached and solitary individuals,
 now one and then another ; they shall “ fly as
 “ a cloud, and as the doves to their windows †.”
 It shall then be fulfilled which is written, “ A
 “ nation shall be born at once ‡.” The seed of
 the gospel, though only “ like a handful of
 “ corn,” scattered perhaps without skill, and
 on the most barren and unpromising spots, “ on
 “ the top of the mountains,” shall produce a
 most abundant harvest of souls to Christ ; for
 the Spirit of the Lord shall cause it to grow :
 “ the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon,
 “ and they of the city shall flourish like the
 “ grass of the earth ||.”—Happy period ! Sion
 shall put off her weeds, and be no more like a
 widow that sitteth solitarily. Her children
 shall be multiplied ; and they shall “ walk in
 “ the truth,” “ love as brethren,” and “ their
 “ souls prosper and be in health.” “ Her watch-
 “ men

* Isa. xxx. 26.

† Isa. lx. 8.

‡ Isa. lxvi. 8.

|| Psalm lxxii. 16.

“ men shall lift up the voice, with the voice
 “ together shall they sing ; for they shall see
 “ eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again
 “ Sion *.” “ Her people also shall be all right-
 “ teous † ;” “ and the work of righteousness
 “ shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness
 “ quietness and assurance for ever ‡.” “ He
 “ that is feeble among them at that day shall
 “ be as David ||.” “ A little one shall become
 “ a thousand, and a small one a strong nation :
 “ I the Lord will hasten it in his time §.”

III. These happy effects of the knowledge and faith of the name of Christ shall not be confined to one region of the earth, or to one race of men. They shall spread wider and wider, till not a dark corner of its surface remain unenlightened, nor one savage tribe uncivilized and unsanctified. CHRISTIANITY SHALL BECOME UNIVERSAL. “ Men,” of all descriptions, and in every country, “ shall be blessed in “ Christ ;” and, moved by gratitude for the benefits which by his grace they enjoy, the whole world shall unite in one grand chorus of praise, and “ all nations shall call him blessed.”

Christianity,

* Isa. lii. 8. † Isa. lx. 21. ‡ Isa. xxxii. 17.

|| Zech. xii. 8. § Isa. lx. 22.

Christianity, though it has existed long, is not at present, and never has been universal. At first, it illuminated only the little horizon of Palestine. It soon filled the wide empire of Rome with its cheering light, and shed some of its rays even on several barbarous nations which had never submitted to her sway. It was not long, however, before its progress, so rapid for a while, was interrupted. Ignorance increased, a worldly spirit quenched primitive zeal, and the truth, debased by error and superstition, lost much of its native power over the consciences and hearts of men ; inasmuch that the boundaries of the church were contracted rather than extended, and, during a mournful period of several centuries, Christianity at once was robbed of much of its internal glory, and became greatly circumscribed in its external limits. The standard of Mahomet was erected in many countries, over which the banner of the cross had formerly waved ; while even the idols of the heathen recovered territories from which they had been ignominiously expelled. The affairs of the church have since become more prosperous ; but even at present, it is a question whether Christianity be more extensively known than

than it was fourteen centuries ago. Its light, indeed, has spread farther towards the west; it has long shone on the British isles; it has crossed the Atlantic, and gladdened the long desolate shores of America. But, following the course of the natural light, as it has progressively advanced from east to west, it has left those parts of Asia which were once enlightened in midnight darkness, while the inhabitants of Europe have reason to mourn with the prophet, "Wo unto us, for the day goeth away; for the shadows of the evening are stretched out *."

But, admitting that Christianity is more widely diffused at present than in any preceding period, yet how little consolation can even this afford to the truly pious soul! He has reason to weep over the miseries of those of his brethren who are called by the name of Christ, as well as of those of them who have never heard its blessed sound. He recollects, that it is professed much more extensively than it is known, and known by millions by whom it not believed. He knows that, in the few countries styled Christian, by superstition in some places, and by
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* Jer. vi. 4.

most pernicious errors in others, it appears in general, like the sun in a mist, shorn of its brightest rays ; while the multitude, in all places, absolute strangers to its regenerating power, live in open violation of its precepts, and, instead of crying, " Hosanna to the Son of David," are more disposed to curse than to bless. But, were the scene ever so pleasing as far as the name of Christ is professed, how wide and dismal the prospect which opens to the view beyond it on every side ! The cultivated field of Christianity occupies only a small spot on the surface of the globe. Beyond it, on this side, rise the dark and waste mountains of heathenism, stretching themselves to the uttermost bounds of the habitable world ; and on that side, the vast, and, in many parts, yet unexplored forest of nations, into which the rays neither of evangelical light nor of civilized manners have ever been able to penetrate, spreads itself abroad far as the eye can reach. What a scene ! The far greater part of the earth, including many of its fairest portions, and of its most populous regions, lies yet uncultivated by the skill of the great " Husbandman ;" and yields no return of glory to its supreme Proprietor, and only a scanty harvest

vest of happiness to its numerous inhabitants. Of spiritual felicity it is absolutely unproductive; nor can it be otherwise, till it be warmed by the rays of the Sun of righteousness, and refreshed by the dew of heaven: for whatever be the mercies of our God, and they are infinite, we know of "no other name under heaven," except that of Jesus, "given among men whereby they " must be saved *." Till a new revelation from heaven be granted us, we must consider " the " people that walk in darkness," as " dwelling " in the land of the shadow of death †."

From this affecting scene let us turn away our aching eyes, and refresh them by a more delightful prospect. Let us, by anticipation of the future, blot out the remembrance of the sorrows occasioned by the contemplation of the past and present state of the world, and exult in the expectation of happier days, soon to arrive, when " the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the " sea ‡," and " when the kingdoms of this " world," shall " become the kingdoms of our " Lord and of his Christ §." How transporting

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* Acts iv. 12.

† Isa. ix. 2.

‡ Isa. xi. 9.

§ Rev. xi. 15.

the view ! Behold the gospel rising upon the benighted nations, and at the appointed season renewing the face of the earth. It shall be “ as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, “ even of a morning without clouds ;” the welcome harbinger of a serene, and bright and joyous day. It shall spread upon the dark mountains of the heathen, gilding them with its golden rays ; it shall scatter the clouds which have long rested on their summits ; it shall speedily enlighten the earth from east to west, and from pole to pole, and “ shine more and more unto “ the perfect day.” Ignorance shall be banished by it from the world. Before it every form of superstition shall disappear. Vice, ashamed of its own deformity, shall retire from view. Peace shall reign on earth ; “ and the glory of “ the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall “ see it together ; for the mouth of the Lord “ hath spoken it *.”

These expectations are not the offspring of a too ardent imagination inflamed by the bold figures of the prophetic style, or merely the fond wishes of hearts warm with the love of God and of mankind. They are excited by a general view

* Isa. xl. 5.

view of the nature and design of the Christian dispensation, and by the promise of him who never raised in the breasts of men expectations which he meant not to realize, nor ever formed a purpose which he was unable to accomplish.

The disorders and miseries which Christianity is intended to remove, are diffused as widely as the race of man. The inhabitants of the opposite extremities of the earth need alike its friendly aid ; for, though some of the symptoms vary with the state of society and the difference of climate and manners, the disease is radically the same, and equally resists all human skill. For this universal disease the gospel furnishes the only efficacious remedy ; a remedy which, when applied, is as universal as the disease, and which is equally adapted to every climate and suited to every diversity in the constitution and habits of mankind. Whether men move in the higher or in the lower spheres, are adorned with learning or untutored by science ; whether they inhabit cities amidst the improvements of civilized life, dwell with the Arabian in clustered tents, roam continually from place to place like the Tartar hordes, or with the naked Indian traverse the forest in quest of the uncertain

tain prey ; whatsoever be the state of society in which they exist, or the system of manners which they have adopted ; they agree in one common need of the blessedness which the gospel reveals, and in capability of deriving from its instructions the most substantial benefit. Learning is not necessary in order to understand its doctrines, nor refinement of taste to relish its beauties. Its piercing light can penetrate into the soul most closely immured in ignorance. Its keen edge can enter the conscience least capable of being affected by moral or religious considerations. It can soften the most savage and melt the most obdurate heart. It demands nothing from persons in order to render them fit subjects of its instructions and fit recipients of its blessedness, but that they be endowed with the common reason and common feelings of man ; and it needs no other means for enabling it to effect its benevolent purposes on them, than the simple representation of its truths, and the attendant light and influence of the divine Spirit. Those who, under the name of Christ, impose on the world a religion which he never taught, and will not patronise, the doctrines of which are too abstruse for the understanding of
any

any but the learned, and too cold and uninteresting for any but the speculative, do well to discourage its propagation among the uneducated heathen, and to reserve it as an entertainment fit only for European understandings, and capable of being relished only by philosophical or by worldly men. Our religion is formed on a nobler and more liberal plan. It stoops to the understanding of the simple and untaught; It comes home to the conscience; it speaks to the heart, of the rudest and most uncivilized. It discovers an asylum, thrown open to the whole world; the way to which the dullest may be made to understand, into which the guilty and miserable of all nations may flee for safety, and "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free *."

Christianity is designed for the general use of mankind. It is not like the Mosaic economy, which was intended for the benefit only of one privileged family, and could never, from the nature of its rites, have been observed by men removed far from the appointed centre of its worship,

* Col. iii, 11.

worship. It looks with equal complacency on men of every nation, of every language, and of every colour. It regards not the place, but the temper of the worshipper ; not the splendour, but the purity of the worship which he performs. The pious heart is now the only temple which God has consecrated to his service, and " men every where lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting, are accepted with him *." There is no " middle wall of partition," like that reared by the law, to prevent the admission of the nations into the bosom of the Christian church. The gospel proclaims " peace, peace to him that is far off, " and to him that is near † ;" and " strangers " and foreigners" become, by the reception of the truth, " fellow-citizens with the saints, and " of the household of God ‡."

This promiscuous admission of the nations of the world into the church of the living God was a mystery to the Jews, and did violence to their most favourite prejudices. Their narrow hearts wished to monopolize the benefits of Messiah's appearance ; not caring that the poor Gentiles

* 1 Tim. ii. 8. Acts x. 35.

† Isa. lvii. 19.

‡ Eph. ii. 19.

Gentiles should be blessed with one ray of "the light of life." They understood not the character of their God, the design of their religion, nor the language of their prophets. JEHOVAH had devised liberal things, more worthy of his wisdom and grace than those which had approved themselves to their contracted minds. His generous heart embraced the interests of all the nations of the earth, and had formed the magnificent plan of a "common faith" and a "common salvation." "It is a light thing," he said to his Son, "that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth *." The law was designed by him merely as a preparation for the gospel. It was only "imposed till the time of reformation," when "the decree should bring forth," and "the heathen be given to Jesus for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession †." Besides, the prophets, inspired by his Spirit, had predicted the conversion of the Gentiles; anticipating the days of the

* Isa. xlix. 6.

† Psalm ii. 8.

the gospel, as a period in which the salvation of God should be "known in all the earth," and exulting in the prospect that then, "from the uttermost part of the earth, songs should be heard, even glory to the righteous One *."

Indeed, the language of the prophets, while it explicitly unfolds the design of God respecting the Christian faith, is calculated to excite in every breast the most sanguine expectations of its universality. It is not to general expressions that they confine themselves; they enter into particular details of the countries in which the gospel should be known; and after having exhausted those names which were most familiar to Jewish ears, conclude their descriptions with expressions of the most general and comprehensive import. According to them, "princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God †." "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents unto him; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts ‡." "And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift, entreating the favour" of the daughter of Sion, and

* Isa. xii. 5. and xxiv. 16.

† Psalm lxxviii. 31.

‡ Psalm lxxii. 10.

and soliciting admission into the Christian church*. The church shall be crowded with an immense concourse of strangers from all quarters.

"The multitude of camels shall cover her, the
"dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; they shall
"bring gold and incense, and they shall shew
"forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks
"of Kedar shall be gathered together unto her,
"the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto her;
"they shall come up with acceptance on God's
"altar, and he will glorify the house of his glo-
"ry†." Nor do even these include "all the
"nations of them that shall be saved" by
the faith of Christ. For "God shall send"
his gospel "to Tarshish, Pul and Lud, that
"draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the
"isles afar off, that have not heard his fame,
"neither have seen his glory; and his glory
"shall be declared among the Gentiles‡."

And when sent to them, it shall not be sent in vain. With open arms, they shall welcome the message from heaven. "As soon as they hear
"of" Christ, "they shall obey him: the stran-
"gers shall submit themselves unto him||."

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"Behold,

* Psalm xlv. 12.

† Isa. lx. 6, 7.

‡ Isa. lxvi. 19.

|| Psalm xviii. 44.

" Behold, these shall come from far ; and lo,
 " these from the north and from the west ; and
 " these from the land of Sinim *." Within
 the pale of the church shall be included both
 continents and islands, the most barren as well
 as the most fertile spots, in every quarter of the
 globe. For Jesus " shall have dominion from
 " sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of
 " the earth. They that dwell in the wilder-
 " nefs shall bow before him † ;" " and the isles
 " shall wait for his law ‡." " He will say to
 " the north, Give up ; and to the south, Keep
 " not back ; bring my sons from far, and my
 " daughters from the ends of the earth § :"
 " So shall men fear the name of the Lord from
 " the west, and his glory from the rising of the
 " sun ||." In one word, " it shall come that he
 " will gather all nations and tongues, and they
 " shall come and see his glory ¶." " For, from
 " the rising of the sun, even unto the going
 " down of the same, my name shall be great
 " among the Gentiles ; and in every place in-
 " cense shall be offered unto my name, and a
 " pure

* Isa. xlix. 12.

† Isa. xlii. 4.

|| Isa. lix. 19.

‡ Psalm lxxii. 8, 9.

§ Isa. xliii. 6.

¶ Isa. lxvi. 18.

"pure offering; for my name shall be great
among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts *."

We are not left to conjecture whether these sublime predictions are to be interpreted strictly of a real universality of the Christian faith, or to be considered only as hyperbolical amplifications of the calling of the Gentiles. The command of Christ, and the conduct of his apostles, proceed on the supposition that the whole world is the theatre on which Jesus designs to manifest his glory; and that, sooner or later, "all the ends of the earth shall look unto him and be saved." He commanded his apostles to "teach all nations †:" "Go," he said, "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature ‡." The civilized world was before them, and it afforded an ample field for their activity and zeal; but to this they were not limited by his instructions, nor did they restrict themselves in consequence of any preconceived ideas of propriety or of probable success. The necessity of civilization in order to fit men for the reception of evangelical truth, is a doctrine which the Saviour of the world never revealed, and which was unknown in the primitive age of

* Mal. i. 11. † Mat. xxviii. 19. ‡ Mark xvi. 15.

of the church. Apostles burned with a zeal which could not wait the slow and uncertain progress of knowledge and manners. They saw the nations perishing. They knew the power and grace of Christ. They considered the faith of the gospel as the speediest and most effectual means of civilizing their savage manners, and as the only expedient for saving their perishing souls. In obedience, therefore, to their Master's command, they preached salvation through his name indiscriminately to every people to whom they had access. "Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world *," and the Spirit of God, in proof that they had not mistaken their commission, accompanied their word with a divine power wherever they went, making multitudes of "the Gentiles obedient by word and deed."

Notwithstanding the command of Christ and the labours of his apostles, the gospel has not yet been preached to every creature. But the predictions of the New Testament, as well as those of the Old, assure us that this period shall speedily arrive. To "the Son of man," there has

* Rom. x. 18.

has been promised "dominion, and glory, and
 "a kingdom, that all people, nations and lan-
 "guages should serve him *," and "the An-
 "cient of days" will perform his word. The
 church shall become commensurate with the
 world. "The stone cut out of the mountain
 "without hands shall become a great mountain,
 "and fill the whole earth †." Jesus "shall
 "speak peace unto the heathen ‡." He shall
 be "sought of them that asked not for him;
 "and found of them that sought him not ;"
 "for that which had not been told them shall
 "they see, and that which they had not heard
 "shall they consider ||." Though therefore ma-
 ny sheep yet stray upon the mountains, be-
 yond the reach of the Shepherd's voice, and ig-
 norant of the path which conducts to the fold
 in which they shall find pasture and enjoy pro-
 tection, they shall not always be forsaken.
 "Them also I must bring," said Christ, "and
 "they shall hear my voice; and there shall be
 "one fold, and one Shepherd §." His provi-
 dence will find means for sending his gospel in-
 to

* Dan. vii. 13, 14.

† Dan. ii. 34, 35.

‡ Zech. ix. 10.

|| Isa. lxxv. 1. lii. 15.

§ John x. 16.

to the most inaccessible parts. Men of an apostolical spirit, "good men, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith," shall be raised up, whom no difficulties shall discourage, nor any dangers terrify, and who shall be willing to undertake, at the risk of every thing dear in life, to be the heralds of his grace unto the nations. These shall fly, like the angel mentioned in the book of the Revelation, "having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people *." "A great door and effectual shall be opened unto" them, though there should "be many adversaries †." The Lord himself shall give the word, "and great shall be the company of those who shall publish it ‡." With the rapidity of "the lightening, which cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west ||," shall the gospel fly through the world; and it shall continue to spread, till every region on which the natural sun shines shall have been illuminated by the beams of evangelical truth; till "the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings

* Rev. xiv. 6.

† 1 Cor. xvi. 9.

‡ Psalm lxxviii. 11.

|| Mat. xxiv. 27.

“ kings of the earth his glory * ;” till “ the people shall be gathered together, and the kingdoms to serve the Lord † ;” “ till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and all Israel shall be saved ‡ .” For “ this gospel of the kingdom,” said Christ, “ shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come || .”

It were an idle dream, I acknowledge, to suppose that Christianity should ever become universal, had we not the most explicit evidence of Scripture to authorise our hopes. I see difficulties enough in the way of its propagation to stagger every thing but faith ; difficulties unsurmountable by human wisdom and power, and which Omnipotence alone can remove. I see how little progress the gospel has hitherto made in the world, and what little influence it has at this moment on the few who believe it. I see prejudices, apparently invincible, in every people in favour of their own superstition. I see nations and countries separated from one another by oceans, by climate, by language, by government, by manners. I see,

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* Psalm cii. 13.

† Ver. 22.

‡ Rom. xi. 25, 26.

|| Mat. xxiv. 14.

in every quarter, the hand of power ready to be stretched out by a narrow policy to prevent its spread; and hell itself, alarmed for the safety of its empire, moved to oppose its arrival. I see want of zeal for its propagation among many styled Christians; a spirit of hostility to every attempt for evangelizing the heathen among others; and want of means among all. I see—But begone, every unbelieving doubt! “God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice *.” “Let God be true, but every man a liar †.” “All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee ‡.” “The Lord will furnish all the gods of the earth: and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen ||.” “For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea §.” “And the Lord shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one ¶.”

* Psalm cviii. 7.

† Rom. iii. 4.

‡ Psalm xxii. 27.

|| Zeph. ii. 11.

§ Hab. ii. 14.

¶ Zech. xiv. 9.

Did the accomplishment of these prophecies depend on the ability or skill even of the best and wisest men, I should despair of seeing the nations enlightened and saved. What can men do to dissipate the darkness of the human mind, and dispel its prejudices against the truth; men who know what blindness and obstinacy once prevailed in their own? But the work is God's, and it cannot miscarry. "He shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory *." His wisdom can be at no loss to devise the means necessary for effecting his own purposes, nor his power to render them effectual. His providence, indeed, has already begun to prepare them. The love of science has excited a spirit of discovery; and already many regions of the earth, formerly hid in the bosom of the ocean, have been explored. A passion for adventure has induced men to penetrate into those countries which are most difficult of access; while commerce, stimulated by the desire of gain, is every day facilitating the intercourse of nations. Though nothing is less in the minds of men, in these various pursuits, than the spiritual advantage of their fel-

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low-

* Zech. vi. 13.

low-creatures, yet the wisdom of God is secretly taking measures for opening a way for the admission of gospel-light into "the dark places of the earth," and bringing to pass what should happen in "the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased*." With these, providence is combining another series of means. He is arousing Christians to an interest in the eternal welfare of the heathen, unfelt before in any similar degree. He is pouring out on the churches a "spirit of supplication" for them. He is opening the hearts of his people to contribute, with unaccustomed liberality, for "making manifest the favour of his knowledge in every place." He is raising up men to devote themselves to this work; men whom no difficulties nor dangers move, who "count not their lives dear unto themselves, so that they may testify" to the heathen "the gospel of the grace of God." Already some of them, borne on the swift wings of faith and love, fly to their help. They hasten to those that "dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea," with the olive-branch of peace in their mouths, and eager to proclaim, "Behold your

* Dan. xii. 4.

"your God." May the Ruler of the winds and waves protect them! May propitious gales waft them "to their desired haven!" And may the blessing of them that were ready to perish soon come upon them!

In these dawns of hope to the nations of the earth, our souls shall rejoice. We perceive difficulties, but we are not discouraged. We expect opposition, but we do not fear it. We entrench ourselves within the perfections of our God. If power oppose the propagation of the truth, it shall do so only to its own destruction. "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve" Sion "shall perish; yea, all those nations shall be utterly wasted*." "All that burden themselves" with opposition to the spread of the gospel "shall be cut to pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it†." A spirit of infidelity we do not dread. Men may exclude the light from their own chamber; but can they arrest the sun at noon, and force him to retire into the east, or even to go back on the dial one degree? What then has the gospel to fear from the feeble exertions of a false philosophy, or of worldly

* Isa. lx. 12,

† Zech. xii. 3.

worldly politics; of human wickedness, or of
 infernal malice? God "will work, and who
 "shall let it*?" Before him "every valley
 "shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill
 "shall be made low; and the crooked things
 "shall be made straight, and the rough places
 "plain†." "The Lord will make bare his ho-
 "ly arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all
 "the ends of the earth shall see the salvation
 "of our God‡." "Listen," therefore, "O isles unto me; and
 "hearken, ye people, from far||." To you my
 text "bringeth good tidings of good." Salva-
 tion to you is in the found. God will surely
 "visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a peo-
 "ple for his name§." He will speedily send,
 saying, "Behold me, behold me, to the nations
 "that were not called by his name¶." "The
 "wilderness and the solitary place shall be
 "glad" at the tidings; "and the desert shall
 "rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blos-
 "som abundantly, and rejoice even with joy
 "and singing: they shall see the glory of the
 "Lord;

* Isa. xliii. 13.

† Isa. xl. 4.

‡ Isa. lii. 10.

|| Isa. xlix. 1.

§ Acts xv. 14.

¶ Isa. lxvi. 1.

"Lord, and the excellency of our God *." Then,
 "blessed in Christ, all nations shall" feel them-
 selves constrained to "call him blessed." The
 day when his grace reached their desolate
 shores to rescue their souls from destruction,
 shall be regarded by them as "the beginning
 of days," as a "day of salvation," never to
 be forgotten. His name shall live in their
 grateful hearts, his high praises shall ever be
 in their mouths, and they shall daily bless the
 hand that set them free. "All the" inhabi-
 tants "of the earth shall praise thee, O Lord,
 when they hear the words of thy mouth."
 "Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the
 Lord †." "O praise the Lord" then, "all
 ye nations; praise him, all ye people. For
 his merciful kindness is great towards you,
 and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever.
 Praise ye the Lord ‡." As for us, let us unite in fervent prayer and
 zealous endeavours for the arrival of this happy
 period. The honour of Christ and the happi-
 ness of mankind combine in making this de-
 mand. Zeal for these ought to be the ruling
 passion

* Isa. xxxv. 1, 2, &c. † Psalm cxxxviii. 4, 5.

‡ Psalm cxvii.

passion of our hearts; and if it reign in them, it will arouse us to every exertion within the compass of our power, to propagate the gospel in the world. While we muse, the fire will burn. Towards these great objects our attention will be irresistibly directed. We shall be unable to sit still amidst the warm comforts of this life, or solacing ourselves in our own peculiar enjoyments, without feeling for the prostrate honour of Jesus, and for the awful danger of our fellow-creatures to whom he is unknown. Every dormant power will be called forth into action. Our time, our talents, our substance, will be cheerfully devoted to the noble service. We will esteem nothing too much by which our gratitude to God, and our compassion for men, can be discovered. Can we indeed be Christians, and yet be indifferent to the glory of that blessed Person, by whose labours and blood we hope to be saved? Can we be loyal subjects to the King of Sion, and not burn with desire that his amiable character be every where published, his grace made known, his kingdom enlarged, and his subjects multiplied? Do we feel as men, and can we look on unconcerned, and see our brethren perish?

Have

Have we known the power and grace of Christ, and yet have we no tear to shed over the misery of that vast portion of the human race who are strangers to his blessed name, and "perish through lack of knowledge?"—Brethren, their misery solicits your aid. It cries to you from the uttermost parts, "Come over and help us." Have "bowels and mercies." In your several stations, bestir yourselves for their assistance. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all your increase *." "Forbear not to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain. Say not, Behold we knew it not; for doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth your soul, doth not he know it †?"

To zealous exertions join fervent prayers; for it is God alone who can give the increase, and make the means you employ beneficial. "Ye," therefore, "that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth ‡." Let "prayer be made for Christ continually" that his fame may be spread

* Prov. iii. 9. † Prov. xxiv. 11, 12. ‡ Isa. lxii. 6, 7.

spread through the world, and that every
 where he may be daily praised *.” “ Let
 “ your hearts desire and prayer to God for”
 the heathen be, “ that they may be saved.”
 “ For Sion’s sake hold not your peace, and for
 “ Jerusalem’s sake do not rest, until the righte-
 “ ousness thereof go forth” to the extremities of
 the earth “ as brightness, and the salvation
 thereof as a lamp that burneth.” “ And the Gen-
 tiles shall see Jesus’ righteousness, and all kings
 “ his glory †.” — “ Our Father which art in
 “ heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom
 “ come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in
 “ heaven ||.” “ Have respect unto the cove-
 “ nant; for the dark places of the earth are
 “ full of the habitations of cruelty §.” “ Let
 “ thy way be known upon earth, thy saving
 “ power among all nations ¶.” “ And let the
 “ whole earth be filled with Jesus’ glory, Amen
 “ and Amen **.”

† Psalm lxxii. 15.

† Rom. x. 1.

‡ Isa. lxi. 1, 2.

|| Mat. vi. 9, 10.

§ Psalm lxxiv. 20.

¶ Psalm lxvii. 1.

** Psalm lxxii. 19.

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THE END.